



## BEST OF SHOW

### BLUE RIBBON IDEAS FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

THE STATE FAIR IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN PEOPLE SHOW OFF THEIR AWARD-winning pies, patchwork quilts and homegrown pumpkins. With a little know-how you can help protect Bloomington's prized natural resources. Here are some blue ribbon ideas to improve the quality of life for all.



#### TAKE THE BUS TO THE FAIR

##### FAST AND CONVENIENT

Support mass transit and take the bus to the fair! Park and ride for free, or pay bus fare and receive \$2 off admission. For more information, call 612-341-4287 or visit [www.metrocouncil.org/transit/statefair](http://www.metrocouncil.org/transit/statefair).



#### IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

##### BEGINS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Visit the Department of Natural Resources at the fair and learn more about their Adopt-A-River Program. However, taking care of Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams starts in Bloomington because the products we use on our lawn and garden can end up in our water bodies via the storm

sewers. To improve water quality, use phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer required by state ordinance, reduce your chemical use and mulch or compost leaves instead of sweeping them into the street.



#### A DEMAND FOR LESS TOXINS

##### ORGANIC FOOD SALES GROWING

According to the *Star Tribune*, sales of organic and natural foods hit a record \$42.8 billion in 2003, accounting for nearly 10 percent of the nation's total grocery spending of \$433 billion. Produce grown without chemicals and pesticides is more readily available because consumers are increasing their demand

for organically grown food. Years ago, people only ate what they grew in their gardens or purchased from local fruit and vegetable stands. Today, many of Bloomington's local supermarkets carry organically grown food.



#### HARVEST TIME

##### GO CHEMICAL-FREE

People who want a less expensive, healthier way to care for their lawns and gardens may want to try organic gardening. More than \$6 billion per year is spent on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides for lawn care that actually produces weak, dependent lawns with shallow root systems. By going

chemical-free, you create a healthier environment for you, your family and pets, in addition to protecting Bloomington waterbodies. Try these natural tips:

1. Choose hardy, native, perennial wildflowers and grasses that thrive without fertilizers and pesticides.
2. Plant trees for a healthy ecosystem and to add cooling shade, beauty and value to your home.
3. Mulch your grass clippings and leave them on your lawn to provide water and nitrogen.
4. Compost with yard waste and other organic material.

For more information on composting in Bloomington, visit our Web site, keyword: Compost.

Source: Committee on Urban Environment and Bald Mountain Press.

*Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action ...*



## EARTH ACTION HERO

### CARLETON, "THE GREEN GARDENER"

LONG-TIME BLOOMINGTON RESIDENT CARLETON, AGE 84, loves to garden. He is retired, but every day during the growing season he heads to the backyard to begin his shift at 7 a.m.

Carleton's quarter-acre garden includes 150 hostas, a variety of vegetables including peppers, squash, tomatoes, melons, cucumbers and many, many flowers. Once known as the "Marigold King," he would grow up to 10,000 marigolds that he started from seeds.

For 24 years, Carleton has amended the soil in his garden to keep it rich and healthy. In the fall, he and his daughter Bonnie collect close to 400 bags of leaves from friends and neighbors. In the spring, they place the leaves around the plantings to control weeds, saving labor and the use of harsh chemicals.

"I have found that leaves work the best for mulch," Carleton said. "When the leaves are tilled into the soil in the fall, they also add valuable nutrients to the soil."

Carleton's daughter Bonnie also tends to the garden. She has a natural solution to their biggest challenge: the deer and rabbits who like to eat the plants. Bonnie sprinkles a handful of powdered laundry detergent (which does not contain phosphates) or sprays a solution of Murphy's oil soap, vinegar and water on the plants. She said both succeed at keeping the animals out and are a great alternative to costly chemicals that don't work as well.

"I have the health of my children and dog to consider," Bonnie said. "I also feel that chemicals will eventually poison the soil that my Dad has worked on for so long."

Carleton is recognized for beautifying Bloomington on a plaque located on the clock tower at 98th Street and Lyndale Avenue.

**Do you know a Bloomington resident who is an Earth Action Hero?** Do they conserve and protect our natural resources in unique or interesting ways? If so, we would like to hear from you. Call Jean Buckley at 952-563-8751.